

Kissinger questioned on Korea case data

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Washington--Henry A. Kissinger testified yesterday he had no knowledge of a South Korean bribery scheme on Capitol Hill until 1975, although he said he had been aware of a Korean lobbying effort for several years before that.

The former secretary of state told the House international organizations subcommittee that he and then-President Gerald R. Ford, after receiving "definitive" reports of illegal Korean activities in 1975, turned the information over to the Justice Department. At that point, he said, the first formal investigation into the affair was begun.

The subcommittee requested Mr. Kissinger's testimony as part of its effort to determine whether senior officials in the Nixon administration knew about illegal Korean activities in the early 1970's, but did nothing about them.

In response to questioning, Mr. Kissinger insisted he never saw two of three top-secret FBI warnings about alleged South Korean influence-buying in Congress, sent to him and John N. Mitchell, then attorney general, in 1971 and 1972.

The intelligence reports stated that a Korean businessman, Tongsun Park, had paid off a congressman; that Korea had contributed several hundred thousand dollars to the Democratic party and that two congressional staffers were linked to the Korean Central Intelligence Agency.

Mr. Kissinger, who was national security adviser to President Richard M. Nixon in 1971 and 1972, said he recalled seeing only one report, which referred to the "alleged bribery of a congressman who was later indicted."

He did nothing about the report, he said, because "it was in the attorney general's domain and did not involve me." Mr. Mitchell previously has testified that he, too, saw only one of the intelligence memos.

"My consciousness of Korean activities until 1975 was of lobbying, not bribery," Mr. Kissinger testified.

Mr. Kissinger was questioned closely by Representative Donald M. Fraser (D., Minn.), the subcommittee chairman, on why he had not seen all three FBI memos addressed to him, since all were marked "Top Secret, Eyes Only."

Mr. Kissinger, who remained cool and self-confident, replied that such memos were screened routinely by his top aides and were not shown to him unless they were considered "top priority."

In that period, South Korea was not a top-priority country for him, he added, since he was concerned primarily with Vietnam, Western Europe, the Soviet Union and China.

Mr. Kissinger added that, if he had seen the report about Korea's alleged contribution to the Democratic party, it was "inconceivable" that he could have forgotten

"I was certainly aware," he added, that the Korean government was lobbying Congress and administration officials in the early 1970's to try to get a decision to withdraw American troops from Korea reversed.

Mr. Kissinger recalled that Melvin R. Laird, then secretary of defense, was so displeased with those lobbying efforts that he complained to the State Department about the Koreans.

But the former secretary of state said he was not aware that large-scale bribery was involved until February, 1975.

At that time, he said, he was told by Philip C. Habib, then assistant secretary of state, about "sensitive intelligence reports which indicated there might be some attempts to lobby or bribe congressmen."

Mr. Kissinger testified that he relayed that information to President Ford, who told him to keep watch over the situation.

"Later in the year," Mr. Kissinger said, "we received some information which was much more definitive."

He said he and Mr. Ford then turned all the information over to the Justice Department for investigation, despite objections from United States intelligence officials who were afraid of losing sensitive sources.

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